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Opening Statement of Congressman Danny K. Davis Subcommittee Hearing
"The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Keeping the Door Open"
March 1, 2011

Let me begin by congratulating you, Chairman Gowdy, on your selection as the Chairman of this important Subcommittee. I am looking forward to building a productive and positive relationship with you as we carry out the Subcommittee's important work this Congress. While I intend on keeping my remarks short this morning, to give Congresswoman Norton an opportunity to speak, I appreciate Chairman's inaugural hearing on a topic that I care so deeply about and have spent a such a great deal of my life focused on, and that is the issue of public education

I share the Chairman's commitment to education; however, as a staunch supporter of public education, I am not in favor of private school vouchers because they mean fewer taxpayer dollars for traditional public. Improving public education in the District of Columbia, as in the rest of the nation, has been and will remain a long and difficult climb. The federal government has played a critical role in providing the District's schools with badly-needed funding since 2004. The City deserves recognition for prioritizing turning around its schools and for the improvements it has made.

I commend the students and parents here today for their advocacy of expanded educational opportunities and for your personal commitment to getting the best education that you can for yourselves or your children. However, I am concerned that there are no parents and students here to advocate for the public schools. Families from those schools also have wonderful stories to tell about exceptional teachers and successful, innovative teaching practices.

Allowing federal dollars to fund private schools diverts attention and resources away from traditional schools that educate the vast majority of students. If we have limited federal dollars for education, we should focus on fixing the public schools that aren't performing well and aiding their students rather than undermining those schools by siphoning scarce federal dollars. That said, I'd like to yield the remainder of my time to the Representative Norton for any opening remarks she may have.